

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 MANILA 11530 01 OF 02 040714Z

21

ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-04 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 INR-07 CIAE-00

DODE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 DHA-02

OMB-01 /046 W

----- 127283

O 040537Z AUG 76

FM AMEMBASSY MANILA

TO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA IMMEDIATE

INFO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8388

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 MANILA 11530

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: OVIP, PINT, RP (ROBINSON, CHARLES W.)

SUBJECT: VISIT OF DEPSEC CHARLES W. ROBINSON: BRIEFING PAPER
ON MARTIAL LAW

REF: MANILA 11484

BACKGROUND:

1. PRESIDENT MARCOS DECLARED MARTIAL LAW ON SEPTEMBER 21, 1972 AT A TIME OF GROWING CIVIL AND ECONOMIC DISORDER. CONGRESS WAS SUSPENDED, THE PRESS MUZZLED AND NUMEROUS CRITICS OF THE GOVERNMENT JAILED, MOST OF THEM FOR ONLY A FEW MONTHS. A NEW CONSTITUTION PROVIDING FOR A PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM (AS OPPOSED TO THE FORMER PRESIDENTIAL SYSTEM) WAS DECREED BUT HAS NEVER BEEN IMPLEMENTED. THE GOVERNMENT HAS SUBSEQUENTLY HELD THREE CAREFULLY MANAGED REFERENDA, THE LATEST IN FEBRUARY 1975, WHICH HAVE ENDORSED MARTIAL LAW.

2. THE MARTIAL LAW REGIME HAS CHALKED UP SOME GENERALLY POPULAR ACCOMPLISHMENTS. THESE INCLUDE SUBSTANTIAL IMPROVEMENT IN CONDITIONS OF LAW AND ORDER, THE MOST AMBITIOUS LAND REFOR PROGRAM IN PHILIPPINE HISTORY, AN EFFECTIVE PROGRAM OF AGRARIAN CREDIT,
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 MANILA 11530 01 OF 02 040714Z

TAX REFORM AND RURAL ELECTRIFICATION. INABILITY TO

CONTROL INFLATION HAS PROBABLY BEEN THE MOST UNPOPULAR FAILING OF THE REGIME TO DATE, ALTHOUGH IT HAS RECENTLY BEEN MORE SUCCESSFUL IN THIS RESPECT. BUT THERE IS ALSO WIDESPREAD MALAISE, ESPECIALLY AMONG THE MIDDLE CLASS, ABOUT THE VISIBLE ACCUMULATION OF GREAT WEALTH BY THE PRESIDENT AND MRS. MARCOS. THE MASS OF PEOPLE APPEAR TO BE APATHETIC ABOUT MARTIAL LAW. COUPLED WITH NOSTALGIA FOR THE PAST IS A RECOGNITION OF ITS EXCESSES, AND FEW APPEAR MOTIVATED TO THE POINT OF CONFRONTING THE REGIME.

3. WE BELIEVE THAT THERE IS A GENUINE CONSENSUS IN THE PHILIPPINES AGAINST A RETURN TO THE CHAOTIC, OLD STYLE DEMOCRACY, WHICH MORE OFTEN RESEMBLED WARLORDISM. THERE IS ALSO DISSATISFACTION WITH THE INDEFINITE CONTINUATION OF A THEORETICALLY TEMPORARY MARTIAL LAW REGIME. AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND, MARCOS IS ATTEMPTING TO EVOLVE A SYSTEM OF "ASIAN STYLE" DEMOCRACY BASED ON EASILY MANAGED ASSEMBLIES AT THE VILLAGE, PROVINCIAL, AND (ULTIMATELY) NATIONAL LEVEL. SUCH A SYSTEM WILL PERMIT SOME ADDITIONAL POPULAR PARTICIPATION WITHOUT RISKING LOSS OF PWER. IT CAN ALSO SUPPLY REASONABLY RESPECTABLE DELEGATES TO REPRESENT THE PHILIPPINES AT INTERNATIONAL PARLIAMENTARY GATHERINGS.

POOPOSITION:

4. MARCOS HAS ALLOWED A DEGREE OF MODERATE CRITICISM TO CONTINUE. A NUMBER OF RESPECTED FIGURES HAVE CONTINUED TO SPEAK OUT AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT, NOTABLY EX-SENATORS TANDA, SALONGA, AND DIOKNO. ANTI-GOVERNMENT ACTIVISTS ARE ALSO FITFULLY VISIBLE IN LABOR AND STUDENT CIRCLES. SOME OF THESE INDIVIDUALS HAVE COMMUNIST CONNECTIONS BUT MORE ARE INSPIRED BY THE CATHOLIC CHURCH. THE CHURCH, ALTHOUGH GENERALLY CAUTIOUS AND CONSERVATIVE, CONTAINS SOME VIGOROUS CRITICS AND IS THE ONLY SIGNIFICANT LEGAL INSTITUTIONAL BASE FOR OPPOSITION TO THE GOVERNMENT. THE PRESS IS GUIDED AND DOCILE. THERE HAS BEEN NO NEED FOR HARSH CENSORSHIP BECAUSE SURVIVING NEWSPAPERS ARE WITHOUT CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 MANILA 11530 01 OF 02 040714Z

EXCEPTION OWNED BY CLOSE FRIENDS OR RELATIVES OF THE FIRST FAMILY.

INSURGENCIES:

5. THE PHILIPPINES IS PLAGUED BY TWO INSURGENCIES, COMMUNIST AND MUSLIM, NEITHER OF WHICH IS A MORTAL THREAT. INTHE SOUTH, MUSLIM REBELS OWING NOMINAL

ALLEGIANCE TO THE MORO NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT (MNLF) TIE DOWN APPROXIMATELY THREE QUARTERS OF THE ARMED FORCES. UNTIL RECENTLY THEY WERE RECEIVING SOME OUTSIDE AID FROM SABAH (EAST MALAYSIA) AND LIBYA BUT THIS APPEARS TO BE WANING. LEADERS OF THE MNLF REMAIN ABROAD, LARGELY UNDER LIBYAN PATRONAGE, AND CONTINUE TO AGITATE AGAINST THE GOP IN INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC CIRCLES. IN RECENT MONTHS THE REBELLION HAS TENDED TO DEGENERATE INTO SPORADIC ACTS OF RANDOM TERRORISM WHICH POSE SOME RISK TO AMERICANS AND OTHER FOREIGNERS IN THE SOUTH.

6. ELSEWHERE IN REMOTE AREAS OF EASTERN LUZON, MINDANAO AND THE VISAYAS, 1,000-2,000 NPA (NEW PEOPLE'S ARMY) REBELS OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF THE PHILIPPINES/ MARXIST LENINIST (CPP/ML) ARE SPORADICALLY ACTIVE. HOWEVER THE COMMUNISTS ARE POORLY ARMED AND ORGANIZED AND (IN CONTRAST TO THE MUSLIMS) THEY HAVE THUS FAR BEEN CONTAINED ALMOST ENTIRELY WITHOUT THE USE OF FORCES OTHER THAN LOCAL CONSTABULARY UNITS. ALTHOUGH THERE ARE NPA REBELS IN MINDANAO, THEY HAVE NOT SUCCEEDED IN COOPERATING WITH THE FRAGMENTED MUSLIM MOVEMENT.

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 MANILA 11530 02 OF 02 040717Z

21

ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-04 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 INR-07 CIAE-00

DODE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 DHA-02

OMB-01 /046 W

----- 127325

O 040537Z AUG 76

FM AMEMBASSY MANILA

TO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA IMMEDIATE

INFO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8389

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 MANILA 11530

7. AS THINGS STAND, THE INSURGENCIES ARE AN EXPENSIVE DRAIN ON RESOURCES ONLY IN COMBINATION WITH OTHER SOURCES

OF VIOLENT OPPOSITION (SUCH AS RENEWED STUDENT UNREST)
AND IN TANDEM WITH A SHARP DETERIORATION OF THE ECONOMY WOULD
THEY PRESENT A SERIOUS THREAT TO THE STABILITY OF THE MARCOS
REGIME.

SUCCESSION:

8. SHOULD MARCOS MEET WITH SUDDEN DEATH THE PROSPECTS
FOR SUCCESSION ARE UNCERTAIN. THE PRESIDENT SAYS THAT
HE HAS PROVIDED FOR THIS CONTINGENCY IN A SECRET
DECREE. A FEW MONTHS AGO HE PERMITTED PRESS CAMPAIGN TO NAME
MRS. MARCOS AS HIS FORMAL SUCCESSOR, BUT NOTHING MORE HAS
BEEN HEARD OF THIS SINCE HER SOMEWHAT CONTROVERSIAL ABSENCE
FROM THE COUNTRY DURING THE DISASTROUS FLOODS OF TYPHOON
DIIIDANG WHICH STRUCK MANILA IN MAY. AN INCREASINGLY POWERFUL
FIGURE IN HER OWN RIGHT, SHE IS ALSO KNOWN TO BE
UNPOPULAR WITH THE MILITARY. WHILE MRS. MARCOS MIGHT
LEAD OR PARTICIPATE IN A SUCCESSOR REGIME, WE WOULD
ANTICIPATE A DOMINANT MILITARY ROLE.

PROSPECTS:

9. WE DO NOT THINK THAT MARCOS WILL RELINQUISH POWER
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 MANILA 11530 02 OF 02 040717Z

VOLUNTARILY. HE WILL CONTINUE HIS EFFORT TO ELABORATE
NEW MARCOS-CONTROLLED INSTITUTIONS AS AN ALTERNATIVE
TO MARTIAL LAW. HE RECENTLY TOLD NEWSWEEK THAT HE IS
PLANNING ELECTIONS FOR A NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE ADVISORY
COUNCIL NO LATER THAN THE FIRST QUARTER OF 1977. POSSIBLY
THE COUNCIL WILL BE EMPOWERED TO LEGITIMIZE ITSELF BY AMENDING
THE NEVER-IMPLEMENTED CONSTITUTION. THIS
MOVE WILL NOT SATISFY CRITICS, PRECISELY BECAUSE IT WILL
PROVIDE A PERMANENT INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE
EXISTING MARCOS-DOMINATED SYSTEM.
SULLIVAN

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: MARTIAL LAW, VISITS, BRIEFING MATERIALS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 04 AUG 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: BoyleJA
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976MANILA11530
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760299-1313
From: MANILA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760888/aaaaczik.tel
Line Count: 209
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 MANILA 11484
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: BoyleJA
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 21 MAY 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <21 MAY 2004 by ifshinsr>; APPROVED <15 SEP 2004 by BoyleJA>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: VISIT OF DEPSEC CHARLES W. ROBINSON: BRIEFING PAPER ON MARTIAL LAW
TAGS: OVIP, PINT, RP, US, (ROBINSON, CHARLES W)
To: CANBERRA
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006